

volume 8, issue 7

this issue

- Fall EDND Meeting
- Hostfest Highlight
- Primary Sector Survey Underway

North Dakota

division of economic development & finance

commerce matters

Realize your Business Dream with Innovate North Dakota Entrepreneurial Program



Do you have an original business concept, commercial innovation, or are looking to take a startup business to the next level? The First Annual

North Dakota Governor's Innovation Forum is now underway.

Innovate ND is a comprehensive program that incorporates an entrepreneur toolkit, online training and mentoring to participants. The program also provides access to seed capital for the most competitive business ideas. Cash awards totaling \$20,000 will be given across various categories.

Current and former North Dakotans and those business innovators who are enthusiastic about relocating to North Dakota are eligible and encouraged to enroll in the Innovate ND program. Student entrepreneurs are also encouraged to enter, but will be judged separately and awarded an independent cash prize.

A unique partnership was forged for Innovate ND with the Governor's office, UND Center for Innovation, North Dakota Department of Commerce, entrepreneurs throughout the state and private companies vested in North Dakota's economic growth.

Visit www.innovatend.com for general information and to sign up for the program. Registration includes a \$100 participant fee that provides you with an entrepreneurial toolkit and online education valued at \$600.

For additional information about Innovate ND contact Justin Schiele at the UND Center for Innovation at 701-777-6207 or justin@innovators.net. ●



Business developers within the Division of Economic Development and Finance hosted a research roundtable during the annual Industrial Asset Management Council conference. Liz Larkin (shown front right) met with corporate real estate managers who help make decisions for relocation and expansion. Eric Icard also participated in the conference.

Packet Digital Expects Growth Year

Packet Digital LLC was founded in 2003 and is an innovator in the design and development of advanced power management, 'smart' radio frequency identification (RFID) and wireless solutions. The company is focused on using its intellectual property to create solutions that match specific customer needs.

Packet Digital offers a broad range of custom-designed smart-sense wireless tags that incorporate sensing capability (i.e., temperature, humidity, etc.). These space-efficient smart tags

(Continued on page 2)





North Dakota

division of economic development & finance

use innovative technologies in advanced power management to enable outstanding power efficiency and system performance. Applications include temperature monitoring and container integrity during refrigerated shipments and pick-to-light systems in a warehouse setting to visually locate product.

During startup and development Packet Digital received \$350,000 in funding from the North Dakota Development Fund plus \$26,250 from APUC for a special project involving wireless sensors to track harvesting, loading and unloading of sugar beets for American Crystal Sugar. The pilot project for American Crystal has proven successful, eliminating manual input and increasing the amount of data gathered during the harvest.

Packet Digital currently employs 15 people and is projecting a need for 40 employees by the end of 2007. ●



President George Bush headlined the Renewable Energy Conference held in St. Louis in early October. Joe Murphy and Eric Icard from Commerce attended the conference. The crux of the conference involved rural America surging ahead with renewable energy efforts, primarily ethanol production. Additional speakers included the Secretary of Energy Samuel Bodman and Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns.

New Value-Added Ag Specialist on Board

The North Dakota Department of Commerce has hired John Mittleider as a value-added agriculture specialist. He has 30 years experience in North Dakota's agriculture industry, including 22 years with two major statewide farm and commodity organizations.

John is an Elgin native and was most recently vice president of public policy for the North Dakota Farm Bureau, a position he held for four years. He spearheaded the organization's state and national government affairs efforts and was responsible for program areas including crop insurance, federal farm programs and international trade. He organized and led a trade delegation to Cuba in 2002 that resulted in more than \$2 million in sales.

John started the position on Nov. 6, and can be reached at 328-5300 or jmittleider@nd.gov. ●

Survey of North Dakota Businesses Underway

Nearly 1,400 businesses within the state have received a survey from the research team at Commerce. The survey of North Dakota businesses gathers information such as gross sales, company products, contract opportunities, company markets and employment numbers from companies likely to be considered "primary sector" businesses. Primary sector businesses add value to a product, process or service while bringing in new wealth from outside the state.

Leigh Ann Huether, interim vice president of research, says the survey results help track business retention, expansion and employment. More importantly the information has the potential to connect businesses with customers in need of their products and services.

(Continued on page 3)

"This survey is vital for all businesses within the state," Huether said. "We can help determine future business opportunities through the needs of existing companies."

Companies are surveyed every two years. Huether said there is usually a 40-50 percent response rate each year. ●

Register for the EDND Fall Conference

The Economic Development Association of North Dakota (EDND) will hold its fall conference Dec. 5-6, 2006, at the Seven Seas Inn and Waterpark in Mandan, ND. Conference registration begins at 12 noon on Tuesday, Dec. 5, with adjournment following lunch on Wednesday, Dec. 6.

The program agenda includes presentations about the Bank of North Dakota incentive programs, the Northern Plains Commerce Centre, the impact of the oil and gas industry in the state, and RAIN Source Capital, an angel investors fund. Also on the agenda is an update from Commerce, as well as the EDND business meeting and 2007 legislative agenda discussion.

The North Dakota Economic Development Foundation Reception and Governor's Choice for Economic Development Awards Banquet will be held Tuesday at 5:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. respectively. Awards are being given for Ambassador of the Year, Project of the Year, Innovator of the Year, Volunteer Developer of the Year and Professional Developer of the Year.

For more information or to register for the conference, please go to www.ednd.org and download the conference brochure.

To simply register for the reception or banquet please send an e-mail to 4dakota@nd.gov or call 1-866-4dakota. ●

Ambassador Program Present at Norsk Hostfest

This year's Norsk Hostfest was a perfect opportunity to connect people who are already enthusiastic about the state to the North Dakota Ambassador Program.

Nearly 100 new Ambassadors from several states, Canada and Europe signed up to help share good news, growth and opportunity within the state. Montana Dakota Utilities was the Ambassador partner for the Hostfest.

"MDU stepped up and made us a visible entity for the event and we extend an enormous thank you to Gary Walker and Dawn Wetzstein who helped make it happen," said Amanda Mack, Ambassador program director. "Norsk Hostfest executive director Pam Davy also deserves credit for advancing the partnership." ●



Pictured above is Ambassador program director Amanda Mack in blue. Amanda partnered with Montana Dakota Utilities which is a major sponsor of the Norsk Hostfest. MDU incorporated Ambassador signage with its materials and allowed Ambassadors to be part of its message booth to spread the word. Pictured with Amanda are: (L to R) Jan Underdahl, MDU of Minot, Mavis Westphal, MDU of Minot, and Laurie Wolfe, MDU Resources Group, Inc. of Bismarck. Minot Ambassadors also volunteered to be part of the festivities.



North Dakota

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Focus on Economic Development with Paul Lucy



Paul Lucy
ED&F Director

As the new director of the Division of Economic Development & Finance (ED&F) of the North Dakota Department of Commerce, I am eager to be fully involved in the efforts to realize economic development success across the state. Success is recognized as an extraordinary accomplishment with a

measurable positive impact derived from exceptional effort. Such success is dependant upon a multitude of factors and forces coming together at all levels. The basis for ED&F staff to be a contributing factor will be contingent upon our ability to be professional, responsive and effective.

This will all begin by listening to our partners. There is a recognizable diversity amongst the communities of North Dakota, as well as its businesses and its workforce. In order for ED&F to be effective in supporting the efforts of our statewide partners, it is imperative that we understand this diversity and the implications it holds for directing our economic development initiatives. To develop that understanding, ED&F and our partners must have open communication which is based upon honesty, trust and mutual respect. Unrestrained dialogue between ED&F staff and leaders at the local,

regional and state level will enhance the division's capacity to operate with a strategic focus that is in the best interest of businesses and citizens of North Dakota.

Through communication we will identify relevant objective goals which can be directly attributed to the initiatives implemented by ED&F. Along with this we will incorporate processes which will allow us to measure, evaluate and adjust our efforts so as to maximize the utilization of our limited financial and human resources.

In upcoming issues of *Commerce Matters* we will address some of the specific efforts and initiatives ED&F will be undertaking. The diversities across our state will result in initiatives which at times will, or may appear, to only be applicable to very specific industries or regions within the state. But rest assured ED&F is committed to delivering a business development strategy that will support all of North Dakota. ●



Economic development professionals participated in a week-long finance education class with training provided by the National Development Council. The North Dakota Department of Commerce and EDND co-sponsored the training. Attendees reported the training helps to secure deals, analyze financial statements and balance sheets and be prepared to help existing or new businesses succeed.

North Dakota

BUSINESS HOTLINE:
1-866-4DAKOTA